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# THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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## Indonesian Christians suffering attacks

JAKARTA, Indonesia (BP) — Although troops prevented a threatened massacre of Christian refugees in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province, a series of church bombings on New Year's Day proves extremist Muslim militias still pose a serious danger to Christians in the province — even after a Dec. 20 peace accord was signed.

In Central Sulawesi's capital, Palu, midnight bombs exploded simultaneously at three churches. A fourth exploded later in the day as worshippers gathered at another church for a service.

Miraculously, no one was hurt in the midnight blasts and only two were injured, even though about 200 worshippers were in one of the churches when the bombs went off.

One policeman was killed and another injured as they attempted to remove the fourth bomb, which had been thrown through the church window by men on motorbikes.

"It was a miracle that no one in our church was killed," Yohanes Moniaga, pastor of one of the churches bombed at midnight, told International Christian Concern, an organization that monitors persecution of Christians around the world.

"As the bomb exploded, I saw people being lifted into the air. Immediately following the explosion, no one left the church. We just called on the Lord and thanked him for his deliverance," he said.

Before Christmas, the Laskar Jihad Muslim militia had threatened to attack as many as 63,000 Christian refugees and residents in the city of Tentena. Thousands of militia fighters armed with automatic weapons rampaged through Christian villages in Central Sulawesi, burning churches and thousands of homes and sending residents fleeing.

A massacre was averted when the Indonesian government quickly sent about 4,500 soldiers to the predominantly Christian city. On Christmas Day, members of an elite police unit from the Indonesian army's mobile brigade guarded churches in the city.

In some places, members of Muslim organizations helped police to safeguard churches. Tens of thousands of Christian refugees, however, remain without shelter and basic necessities.

On Dec. 20, Christian and Muslim groups signed a peace pact designed to end three years of hostilities in the area. Militia members have been surrendering weapons and police will begin a major disarmament effort later this month.

The 10-point peace accord, the fifth such agreement in recent years, promises to stop all fighting, mediate disputes and



IN PROTEST — Christians in Ambon, Indonesia, build mock coffins to use in demonstrations protesting the lack of government protection or response to attacks on Christians in the area. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

reject outside interference, including the Laskar Jihad.

More than 50,000 people, mostly Christians, have been driven from their homes by the fighting.

Since mid-2000 around 1,000 people have died in religious clashes in the province. Up to five times that number have been killed in even worse Muslim-Christian violence in neighboring Maluku in recent years.

Central Sulawesi and Maluku are the

only parts of predominantly Muslim Indonesia to have roughly equal Christian and Muslim populations.

On Christmas Eve 2000, 19 people died in attacks on churches in nine cities.

"The situation has remained calm," a missionary in Jakarta reported on Dec. 28. "We do need to pray that the Laskar Jihad will be removed from the area and that the Christians and Muslims of the Poso area will work together for peace."

"Some of the Christians in the Napu area are still holding off returning home until they feel they will be safe."

• Encourage government officials to help stop violence against Christians in Indonesia, by faxing US Secretary of State Colin Powell at (202) 261-8577 and Indonesia's Charge d' Affairs, T.A. Samodra Sriwidjaja, at (202) 775-5365.

• Contact your congressman with the "Find Your Reps" feature at <http://congress.org>.

• Encourage media coverage of the atrocities in Indonesia by e-mailing comments@foxnews.com and feedback@cnn.com.

• International Christian Concern web site: [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org)

• Resources on persecuted Christians: <http://www.eric.com/RLiberty/Persecution/persecution.htm>

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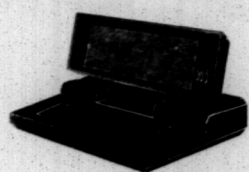
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**D**ave Thomas, the affable founder and pitch man for the Wendy's chain of restaurants, died of liver cancer on January 8. He was 69 years old. His life is was nothing short of remarkable.

A child of the Great Depression, Dave loved nothing more than the rare opportunities when his family could afford to eat at restaurants. As a youngster he dreamed of owning a restaurant.

Dave's father was forced to move frequently in search of work. When Dave was 15, his father announced that the family would have to leave their home in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and relocate to a new job site.

Dave, who began working at restaurants at the age of 12 and was working full time at a local Hobby House restaurant by that time, decided he didn't want to move again. His father allowed him to rent a room at the YMCA and stay in Ft. Wayne.

Shortly after the family left town, Dave figured he could learn more about the restaurant business from hands-on experience and dropped out of school.

Dave joined the U.S. Army at age 18 and gained valuable training as one of the youngest-ever managers of an enlisted men's club. After his discharge from the Army, he returned to his job at Hobby House.

In 1956 Dave's boss in the restaurant business, Phil Clauss, began to invest in a new kind of restaurant — an early franchising operation that specialized in one basic product. It was through those franchises that Dave met a man who would have a dramatic influence on his life: Colonel Harlan Sanders, originator of the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) chain.

By 1962, the Clauss KFC restaurants were in deep financial trouble and sinking quickly. Threatened with ruin, Clauss asked Thomas to go to Columbus, Ohio, and try his best to save four ailing KFC restaurants in that city. In return, Clauss promised Thomas a 45% stake in the restaurants if he could turn them around.

## A poorer nation

Dave not only saved the restaurants, he brought in enough business to pay off the huge indebtedness that had been incurred by Clauss. True to his word, Clauss gave Thomas 45% of the restaurants.

He never gave up on his dream of owning his own chain of restaurants, however, and in 1969 he opened the first Wendy's — named for his daughter — in Columbus, Ohio.

In the first 100 months, more than 1,000 Wendy's restaurants were opened. Three years later, the number reached 2,000 restaurants. There are now more than 5,000 Wendy's restaurants around the world, grossing more than eight billion dollars last year alone.

In addition to his Wendy's business, Dave was a tireless crusader for children. He supported a number of children's charities. The adoption charities were closest to his heart, however. You see, Dave Thomas had been adopted at the age of six weeks. He never knew his biological mother or father. He just knew his adoptive parents gave him a good start in life that so many other children needed.

His efforts were recognized by several U.S. presidents, and he testified before the U.S. Congress on adoption rights and tax breaks for adopting children.

All in all, Dave Thomas lived his life as if it really counted for something, and it did. How sad it is to contemplate that in another day and time — our time — Dave would have been considered expendable.

Dave's mother would have been told today that she didn't have to become a mother. She would have been told that the formless blob of tissue inside her wasn't a real baby at all. She would have been told that this little inconvenience didn't have to interfere with her lifestyle or education or career. She would have been advised that there was any easy way out.

Chances are she would have chosen to end Dave's life before it ever began, and

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

JANUARY 20, 2002



"You created my inmost being"

Sponsored by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

we would have been so much the poorer for his early demise.

How many Dave Thomases have there been among the tens of millions of babies killed in this country since 1973? How many doctors? How many national leaders? How many pastors? No one can ever know for certain.

One thing is for certain, however: We are indeed a poorer nation for having allowed abortion all these years.

Our prayers go with you, Dave, and with the millions just like you we never had the privilege of knowing. Maybe one day, we'll make it right. Maybe.

## GUEST OPINION:



*Life: never to be  
devalued*

By Jimmy Porter, Exec. Dir.  
Mississippi Baptist  
Christian Action Commission

**O**n September 11, the United States of America was driven to her knees. The unbelievable unfolded before our eyes.

No longer were acts so horrible restricted only to movie screens. There were no stunt men, nor was it mere science fiction. Flashing across our television screens were scenes that screamed at us that for some life has no value.

The actions of the terrorists said, "My cause, my will, and my desires are more precious than life — mine or yours."

This mentality is opposite the Psalmist, who wrote, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is they name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens... What is man, that thou are mindful of him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:1, 4-5).

To the Psalmist, mankind is the special creation of God and life is never to be devalued.

Our society has a difficult time deciding which view is correct. I saw two bumper stickers that reflect different values on this issue. One was a

pro-abortion sticker that said, "Keep your hands off my body." The other depicted a mother and child with the caption, "Both are precious. Love them! Stop abortion."

In America polls show that over 60% of the people say abortion is murder, but about the same number say a woman has the right to choose whether her child lives or dies.

Are we saying it is all right to murder our own?

Jim Butler, pastor of Trinity Church, Southaven, wrote an article that speaks clearly and pointedly to the sacredness of life (excerpted below):

"On September 11, the world watched in horror as terrorists took over four commercial jets and used them as tools of

death. This heartless attack on innocent lives brought an outcry heard around the globe.

TV commentators condemned those who could have had such a low opinion of life that they could order such attacks. National leaders cried out for something to be done.

Yet, who cries out to stop the murder of 4,400 unborn babies every day in America? In 1973 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* that abortion was now the law of the land. Since those rulings, 42 million precious babies have been destroyed in the mother's womb. This makes the mother's womb the most dangerous place on earth when it comes to child welfare and safety.

Life is precious, whether it is the life of the unborn, the fit, or the infirm. It is time for the outcry of life to be heard, even to our nation's capital. Please join your voice with ours!"

You and your congregation can join in the urgent cry. The month of January has been designated Sanctity of Human Life Month by Southern Baptists. Sanctity of Human Life Day is Sunday, January 20.

If all of us would join our hearts and hands together and cry out to God, then perhaps we will see the day when abortion is no longer the law of the land.

Sanctity of life encompasses much more than the issue of abortion. Physician-assisted suicide, domestic violence, and child abuse are other issues that need to be addressed from a biblical perspective.

I often thank God for the privilege of living in America, but are we as civilized, and concerned about life as we claim to be?

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# China stepping up Christian persecution

WASHINGTON (BP) — President Bush and senior U.S. congressmen have taken a personal interest in the case of a Hong Kong businessman who faces trial for smuggling Bibles into China, and that has helped allay concerns of human rights activists who feared that Washington might overlook Chinese abuses because of Beijing's cooperation in the war against terrorism, CNSNews.com reported Jan. 10.

Frank Lu of the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said by phone Jan. 10 that campaigners were optimistic the high-profile intervention could make a difference in the case of Li Guangqiang, a Christian businessman who has been in Chinese custody since last May.

Although Li had been expected to go on trial as early as mid-January, Lu predicted the case may now be postponed, possibly for months, because of the political and media attention.

China had tried to take advantage of the post-Sept. 11 situation by clamping down on opponents. Li welcomed the fact that the United States seemed unwilling to overlook violations simply out of appre-

ciation for Beijing's cooperation in the anti-terror drive.

Li, 38, is accused of smuggling more than 16,000 Chinese-language Bibles from Hong Kong into southeast China and could face the death penalty if convicted of practicing unauthorized religious activity, the center said.

The U.S. State Department said the president was "troubled" by the case, and longtime China critic Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) who is visiting China, raised it in talks with Vice Premier Li Lanqing in Beijing Jan. 9, warning of the negative impact of punishing people for importing Bibles.

Another California congressman, Republican Dana Rohrabacher, also has spoken out about the case.

The Bibles were destined for

a Protestant group called the Shouters, after their tendency to "shout out their devotion to Jesus," Lu said.

Beijing has labeled the group as an "evil cult" — the same designation given to the Falun Gong meditation sect and some 16 other Christian organizations, according to the center.

Lu said apart from the shouting, he did not see the Shouters — which have around half a million members and links with western churches — as being very different from other evangelical Christians.

Two members of the Shouters were arrested with Li.

China, which only tolerates official "patriotic" religion, claims to print up to three million copies of the Bible each year, but Lu said for members of underground churches like the Shouters, obtaining a Bible could be very difficult.

Beijing has responded to reports about Bush's concern by saying the United States should not interfere in China's "independent judicial system."

Li was using the delivery of the Bibles as a cover for smuggling "a large amount of cult publications," foreign ministry spokesperson Sun Yuxi charged.

Lu said the businessman had won a great deal of sympathy from Christian groups and media in his native Hong Kong.

The director of the Hong Kong Christian Institute, Rose Wu Lo-sai, was quoted Jan. 11 as saying that although people might differ over the need to deliver Bibles to China, the right to do so should be upheld.

The institute and other religious and human rights groups have urged the Hong Kong regional government to ensure Li's release and safe return.

In Beijing, Lantos told journalists that the Li case was a reminder that human rights violations remained an obstacle in bilateral relations despite improved relations arising from China's cooperation in the U.S.-led anti-terror campaign.

"As we applaud China's cooperation, we are suggesting to them that cooperation would get far more public support from the United States if they would get rid of the ugly aspects of their society," he said.

"The negative impact globally for punishing people for importing Bibles, at least in the Christian world, is so powerful that it is counterproductive."

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### Execution delayed

LONDON (BP) — The 46-year-old founder of the "South China" house church movement, Gong Shengliang, has been granted a reprieve from a death sentence that was scheduled to be carried out Jan. 5, Gong's relatives have reported, according to a Compass Direct news service dispatch. High-level pressure on the Chinese government was exerted after news broke in early January that Shengliang had been given a death sentence in a Dec. 18 secret trial in Hubei province on charges of "complicity in rape" and "leading an evil cult," Compass Direct reported. Sources in Beijing confirmed that Gong had indeed not been put to death, the news service reported, but the official reason from the Chinese Foreign Ministry was that Gong had been granted a period of several months to appeal the death sentence. High-level sources are confident that Gong will have his death sentence commuted to imprisonment, especially as evidence has come to light that two women whose testimony was used to convict him of rape were forced to provide false versions of events, Compass Direct reported. The 50,000-member South China movement is one of many spinoffs from the larger Born Again house church movement, whose founder Xu Yongze recently served three years in jail. The evidence against Gong has not been made public, and some evangelical sources are skeptical that his movement is a cult or that the rape charges are well-founded, Compass Direct reported. "This group is in big trouble; the police are really gunning for them," a Beijing house church pastor told Compass Direct, "but I don't think they are particularly bad. They may be a bit eccentric in some doctrines, but there is nothing cultish about them." Sources in Beijing said that Gong's reprieve was due "in a significant measure" to the pressure exerted by U.S. government and congressional sources, as well as swift publicity by agencies such as Compass Direct and Freedom House. The year 2002 is expected to be a difficult year for those house churches that refuse to register with the government. According to Compass Direct, evidence suggests that the multi-million-member Born Again movement also has been singled out for harassment, show trials and multiple jailings of its leaders.

### Looking back

#### 10 years ago

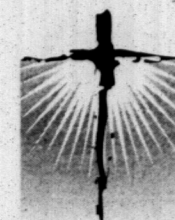
The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's coordinating council votes unanimously in Dallas to call Cecil E. Sherman, pastor of Broadway Church in Fort Worth, Texas, as the first full-time coordinator of the Atlanta-based group formed after the SBC's "Conservative Resurgence."

#### 20 years ago

Southern Baptists will have to establish new churches faster and keep existing churches alive if they are to meet the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 50,000 churches by the year 2000, says a research report prepared by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

#### 50 years ago

Two Minnesota Baptists obtain a temporary court injunction against five members of a whipping cult who are allegedly trying to convert them. The couple claim that they are being molested by members of the cult, which believes in whipping to drive the devil out of people.



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE



## Rogers suffers heart attack during cruise

MIAMI, Fla. (BP) — Former three-time Southern Baptist Convention president Adrian Rogers is recovering in a Miami hospital after suffering a mild heart attack Jan. 10. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tenn., underwent surgery for a blocked artery on Jan. 11 at South Miami Hospital.



Rogers

He is expected to make a full recovery, doctors said. Rogers was in Cozumel, Mexico, preaching on a Bible study cruise when he suffered the attack. He was flown to Miami for treatment.

"I had preached Wednesday night and was autographing books when I felt a heaviness in my chest," Rogers told Baptist Press in a telephone interview. "I went to the ship's infirmary and I was later flown to Miami."

Rogers said he was resting comfortably and "reading the book of Revelation." His wife Joyce accompanied him on the trip.

"I appreciate the prayers and concern but I feel good and I'm looking forward to two or three weeks of reading," Rogers said. He could be released from the hospital as early as this week.

# Longtime SBC leader W.A. Criswell dies

DALLAS (BP) — W.A. Criswell, the pastor of First Church, Dallas, who influenced a generation of Southern Baptist pastors, died in the early morning hours of Jan. 10 in a private residence. He was 92.

Criswell served as pastor of one of the nation's largest Southern Baptist congregations from 1944 until 1991, when he was given the title of senior pastor. He had held the title of pastor emeritus since 1994.

Criswell's memorial service was held Jan. 16 in the sanctuary of First Church, Dallas. His body lay in state Jan. 14 at Criswell College, which he founded in Dallas, and Jan. 15 at First Church, Dallas.

He is survived by his wife Betty; daughter Mabel Ann; and two grand sons.

Evangelist Billy Graham said Criswell would be remembered for his "electric" preaching style.

"It is almost impossible to evaluate the life and ministry of W.A. Criswell," Graham said. "He had a multiplicity of gifts. He had one of the most loving hearts I have ever known."

Graham said Criswell's personal counsel and love meant more than he would ever know.

"He was anointed by the Holy Spirit in an unusual way," Graham said. "In recent years I did not see him often, but the memory of years past had a spiritual impact on me."

Twice elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1968-69), during the 20 years that followed Criswell was perhaps the most popular preacher at evangelism and pastors' conferences in America while also preaching extensively in mission fields worldwide.

His denominational involvement also included serving as trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board [now LifeWay Christian Resources], Annuity Board, Baylor University, and Dallas Baptist University, as well as Baylor Health Care System and the Baptist Standard newspaper of Texas.

Criswell authored 54 books, including many collections of sermons he delivered while preaching through books of the Bible. Others dealt with issues relevant to the

times in which he lived, such as the case against evolution in *Did Man Just Happen?*

In *Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True and The Bible for Today's World*, he addressed the movement away from belief in an inerrant Bible. The *Holy Spirit in Today's World* dealt with the emerging charismatic movement.

From the pulpit Criswell developed a preaching-teaching ministry that inspired a generation of Southern Baptist preachers in the practice of expository preaching.

During Criswell's tenure at First Church, Dallas, the church grew from 5,000 members and an annual budget of \$150,000 in 1944 to nearly 26,000 members and a budget of more than \$11 million.

Wallie Amos Criswell was born in Eldorado, Okla., in 1909. The dust bowl drove the Criswell family to the Texas panhandle on the border of New Mexico.

At age 10 he professed faith in Christ at a revival meeting. By the time he was 12 he made a public commitment of his life to the gospel ministry, delivering his first sermon as the funeral message for a beloved pet dog.

Criswell was licensed to preach at age 17 and held student pastorates at Devil's Bend Church and Pulltight Church, both in Texas, during his college studies at Baylor University.

After completing his master of theology



Criswell

and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Criswell married Betty Harris, the pianist of the Mount Washington Church where he pastored.

The Criswells had agreed to interpret the first call of a church to be a sign of God's direction. Although First Church of Birmingham, Ala., had expressed interest in Criswell serving as pastor, it was First Church of Chickasha, Okla., that issued the first call.

After serving the Oklahoma church for four years, Criswell moved across state to First Church of Muskogee where he pastored until 1944.

Called to Dallas' First Church in 1944, where he followed the beloved George W.

Truett who had pastored there 47 years, Criswell retired as senior pastor in 1995 after half a century of service to that church.

He continued serving as chancellor of Criswell College that he founded in 1970.

Criswell's concern for the inner city led to support of more than 15 mission chapels staffed with pastors and to sponsorship of Dallas' largest shelter for the homeless, the Dallas Life Foundation.

*Editor's note: A tribute to Criswell by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee can be viewed at [www.sbc.net/criswell](http://www.sbc.net/criswell). A collection of his sermons can be viewed at [www.wacriswell.com](http://www.wacriswell.com).*

## Pro-life coalition planning advertising campaign

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Special) — An historic coalition of pro-life and pro-family groups has announced a broad-based national television campaign to dispel the myths that built the abortion industry.

The media buy, headed up by the group Shake the Nation Back to Life, is scheduled to begin shortly before the 29th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* on January 22. *Roe v. Wade* struck down abortion prohibition laws in America, allowing the slaughter of tens of millions of babies throughout all nine months of pregnancy.

The effort is not only directed toward achieving certain political goals, but reaching the hearts and minds of Americans. In the ad, three founders of the abortion movement will tell the American people they lied about the realities of abortion and about their lives to further the abortion cause.

Physician Bernard Nathanson, founder of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL); Norma McCorvey, the plaintiff 'Roe' in *Roe v. Wade*; and Sandra Cano, the plaintiff 'Doe'

in *Doe v. Bolton* (a companion lawsuit to *Roe v. Wade*), are involved in the campaign.

Currently, up to 32 organizations are also supporting the campaign, including the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, American Family Association, and the Center for Reclaiming America.

The Shake the Nation campaign is the brainchild of Center for Reclaiming America national director Janet Folger.

"We want to Shake the Nation Back to Life not just by talking about the politics of abortion, but by letting people know the truth about how we got where we are today," Folger said.

Campaign goals include organizing grassroots efforts in advance of any future Supreme Court appointments, informing the administration and Senate of the strong support for pro-life appointments, and reaching out to the many Americans who are not aware of the realities of the abortion industry.

Meanwhile, pro-life advocates will fight this year what appears to be an uphill battle to enact federal legislation protecting the sanctity of human life.

Entering the 30th year since abortion's legalization in the United States, opponents of the practice are seeking incremental victories in Congress while also following through on attempts to protect embryonic life from destructive experimentation.

Pro-life members of Congress hope to adopt early in the year a comprehensive ban on human cloning and to turn back an attempt to liberalize President Bush's policy on embryonic stem cell research.

They also would like to complete adoption of two measures that would enhance legal protection for unborn and newly born children.

The combination of a congressional election year, the narrow majorities in both houses of Congress, and a Senate majority normally adverse to pro-life proposals is expected to make 2002 a difficult year for decisive legislation and therefore a challenge

for advocates of protecting human life at all stages.

Pro-lifers plan to work hard in spite of the obstacles.

"We will be diligently pursuing these issues," said Shannon Royce, government relations director for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "We will seek votes in any way we can get them through regular process or amendment."

A bill on which pro-lifers have been promised a vote is a proposal to prohibit human cloning for both reproductive and research purposes.

The House of Representatives approved the Human Cloning Prohibition Act in July by more than 100 votes, but the Senate failed to act.

In the fall, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) promised Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), the chief sponsor, a vote in February or March.

How simple it will be to gain an up-or-down floor vote on the ban remains to be seen. The president has endorsed the comprehensive ban on funds to organizations.



## ANN DOESN'T KNOW EVERYTHING

Advice is somewhat like opinions in that everybody has some. One of the differences between opinions and advice is that you can have opinions without passing them out or imposing them on others, whereas advice is more of an action word and somehow people feel compelled to convey it to others.

For decades now the number one advice giver in America has been Ann Landers. It doesn't matter what area of life or arena of discipline, she has the insight. From dating to drooling, from in-laws to papaws, she will tell you what she thinks.

There are times when you want to stand up and applaud what she says, and then there are other times when you want to pause and throw up. Still other times, Ann gives wisdom concerning issues about which she knows little or nothing.

Over the closing days of 2001, a local newspaper carried one of her advice responses with this headline, *Using Funeral to Recruit Church Members Quite Tacky*.

Ann was giving advice in response to a letter from someone signed, "Resentful in the South" concerning a funeral they had attended. It seems as though the person writing for advice had been to their grandfather's funeral. The grandfather had just died after a long illness.

At the funeral service, the minister who was conducting the funeral expressed to the family how the grandfather's final wish was that all of his children and grandchildren become saved. According to the letter-writer, the minister "tried to lay a guilt trip on us by saying if we did not join the church we would not see my grandfather in Heaven."

The letter closed by saying, "Please tell ministers that funeral services, a time of grieving and saying goodbye to our loved ones, is not meant to be an opportunity to recruit."

Ann's terse response was, "That tasteless and inopportune attempt to recruit new members to the church was ham-handed and an insult to the bereaved."

Now, before I explain to you that Ann Landers does not know everything there is to know about funerals or how to conduct them, I also want to confess to you that I do not know everything either.

When it comes to working with the family, carrying out the wishes of the deceased, sharing Biblical truths from an Evangelical standpoint in the face of death, or in other words, conducting a Christian funeral, I know a few things that Ann Landers does not know.

Ann does not realize how many times pastors receive requests concerning what should be done at a funeral.



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Through the years, both from the family and from the deceased, I have received requests related to funerals.

These requests ranged from the use of certain Scriptures, to music (whether religious or secular), to instructions to be read or conveyed to those who come.

The question is, "What is the minister supposed to do?" Should he agree, ignore, or refuse to be involved?

Often a family will express what they want the spirit of the service to be like — things like upbeat, happy, uplifting, and evangelistic are expressed. The truth is that everyone in the family may not agree, and especially other people related to the death experience may not understand, but what do you do?

Years ago I was meeting with a family as we prepared for a funeral service for the departed husband and dad. The wife and children requested of me something that they had obviously talked about rather extensively — that they did not want one reference to him. No mention of who he was, or what he did — nothing!

I had never had such a request and immediately tried to help them think through what they were asking of me. Eventually, I got them to agree to at least let me read the facts of the obituary of his birth and death, and name the surviving members of his family.

At first I did not think they were going to agree to that. It is more frequent than most people would ever imagine — that the minister is put in an awkward position of saying or not saying things at a funeral that the family wants to impose.

Ann does not realize the difference between church recruitment and salvation. The letter to Ann Landers and the response indicated that they are one and the same — recruiting people for our church membership and seeing people "saved."

For anyone who knows anything about Scripture, they are, of course, not the same at all! They are eternities apart! It was Jesus who said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by me."

To come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is not only a life changing experience, but also an eternity altering experience. Joining a church, for many people, is nothing more than a cultural/religious/social event.

The purpose for which Jesus

Christ, God's Son, came to this earth was not just to start new, religious, social clubs; but, as the announcement was made at his birth, "His name shall be called Jesus for he shall save people from their sins." There are many different religions and many different approaches to religious discussions, but there is only one Savior and that is Jesus!

Ann does not realize that God's advice about issues and eternity is far more important than hers or her readers. From the beginning until now there have been advice givers everywhere.

When Adam and Eve were in that perfect garden, provided for perfectly by a loving God, Satan came to give his advice. If you will look back in Genesis 3 and think through what happened, you will hear Satan saying to Adam and Eve, "God said...now, let me give you my take on it."

While Jesus was here on this earth he, of course, attended funerals and some of them are recorded in Scripture. He always had an amazing word and it had to do with eternity.

On one occasion, in John 11,

Jesus went to where his dear friend, Lazarus, had died and been buried. It was there that he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Then Jesus asked, "Believe thou this?"

There is, without question, the responsibility and the opportunity at the crucial life and death moments that the question should be raised, "Are you ready to die?"

I am fully aware that it can be done without sensitivity and void of love. I am also aware that the Gospel questions can be presented forthrightly with love and compassion. To fail to do so would be irresponsible.

Ann also does not realize that the writer sounds much like Saul of Tarsus, struggling internally over his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When Saul did not know what to do about his own condition, he lashed out at the church, at the believers, and at the Lord himself.

Saul sought in every way he possibly could to make them look like the evil ones, the bad guys, and the ones who were out of step and out of touch. He would in time come to know the loving Lord Jesus who would enable him to understand that if you are not in touch with the Lord, you are not in touch with life.

May God help us to be sensitive to the needs of folks around us and also to be faithful to the Lord who called us!



### YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## LifeWayonline.com celebrates first year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — LifeWayonline.com is celebrating its first anniversary. The Internet site, operated by the E-Business department of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, was launched one year ago to provide daily content of interest to Christian individuals and families from all walks of life.

E-Business Strategy Manager Steve NeSmith, who came to LifeWay in July 2000, managed the launch of the new site. "It's been exciting to see how LifeWayonline.com has evolved over the past year," he said.

In February 2001, Jeff Large joined the E-Business Group as LifeWayonline.com's senior editor, moving from his position as managing editor of LifeWay's ParentLife magazine.

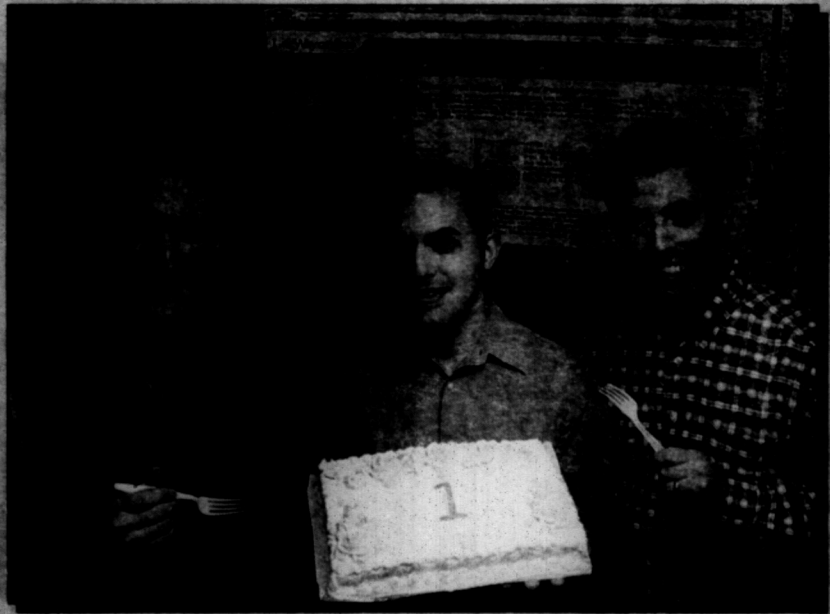
"So many people have played an important role in the site's success," he said. "We are all very excited to see how God will work as we continue to grow. We are well on the way to our goal of being the top Christian Web site on the Internet. Our deep desire is to impact the world and see lives transformed for Christ."

In June 2001, Dan Kassis was hired to add his on-line editorial experience to the site. Kassis came from a similar position with a California book publisher.

"Moving so far from my home was a big change," he said, "but I truly believe that

God planned this team to come together to impact lives for his Kingdom, and it's definitely been worth it, especially seeing the growth in daily visitors to our site."

LifeWay's E-Business team of designers, analysts and strategists supports the full-time editorial staff. Currently, LifeWayonline.com offers content for parents, families, single adults, students and seniors. The staff also provides daily updates of news stories of interest to Christians, as well as entertainment, health, and career and workplace articles.



CELEBRATING — Jeff Large (left), Dan Kassis (center), and Steve NeSmith joined other LifeWayonline.com staff members in celebrating the first anniversary of LifeWayonline.com. (BP photo by Bill Seaver)



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



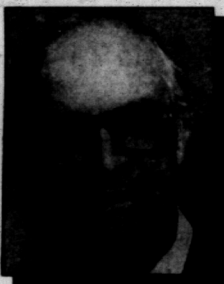
Building Committee of Clarke-Venable Church, Decatur

### M. Glenn Smith dies

M. Glenn Smith, 87, died Dec. 20 at Rest Care Hospice in Philadelphia. Services were held Dec. 22 at Bethsaida Church in Philadelphia. A native of Neshoba County, Smith was ordained to the ministry at the age of 21 at Bethsaida, his home church.

He pastored in Mississippi for many years, serving churches in DeKalb, McComb, and Corinth. He then served churches in Florida from 1964 until returning to Mississippi in 1983. After moving back to Philadelphia he served Rock Branch, Union County, and Center Ridge, Kemper County. In addition to pastorates, his ministry included years of serving as county missionary in both Florida and Mississippi.

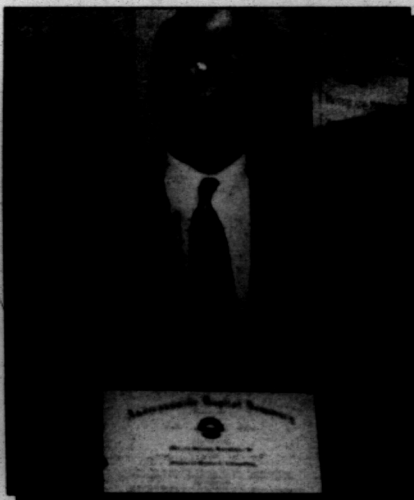
Smith is survived by his wife of 65 years, Zudye Willis Smith, also of Neshoba County; children, Jo Smith Hollman, Jackson; Zudith L. Manning, Philadelphia; Cheri Smith Williams, Vicksburg; and Michael Glenn Smith, Philadelphia; eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren; and sister, Maye Kimbrell of Jackson.



Smith

Clarke-Venable Church, Decatur, has begun construction on a new education building. The building will be two stories with a steel superstructure and 19,414 square feet under roof. The first floor will include a nursery and rooms for youngsters. The second floor will have rooms for Sunday School classes, a large kitchen, and fellowship hall. A covered drive will connect the new education building with the existing buildings. The building committee (pictured from left) are Barbara Russell; Mickey Vance; Stan Buckley, pastor; Chris Harris; Eddie Smith, chairman; and Betty Tingle. Not pictured is Bud Smith.

Trinity Church, Waynesboro, honored its pastor, Marcus Burnham, on Dec. 9. He recently graduated from Andersonville Baptist Seminary, Camilla, Ga., with a doctorate in pastoral counseling.

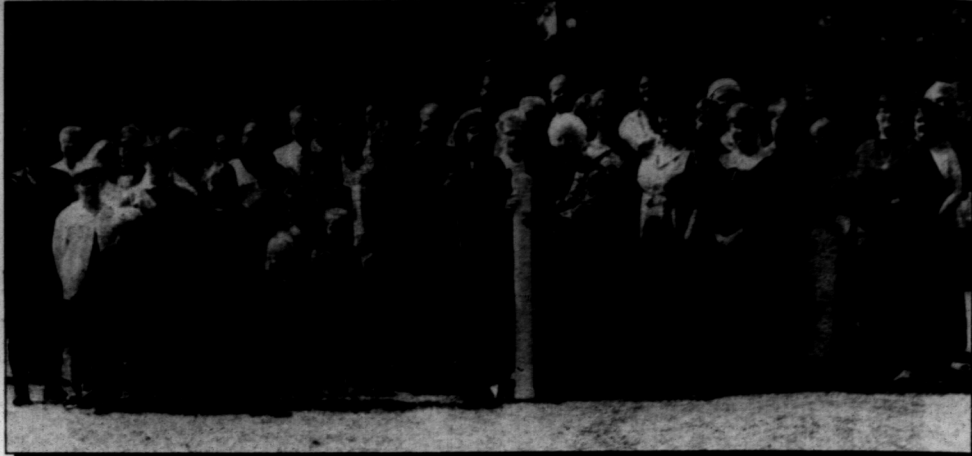


Burnham



West McComb Church, McComb, held a note burning on Nov. 18 in recognition of paying off a loan dated Oct. 9, 1998 for the new family life center. Pictured (from left) are Gene Douglas, pastor; Lamar May, chairman of deacons; and Wilford Case, Sunday School director.

Members of Seminary Church, Perry Association, recently buried a time capsule to commemorating the church's centennial celebration. The capsule contains current newspapers, a church directory, a centennial booklet, and testimonials from members. The date set for retrieval is September 2101. Members (pictured) of the homecoming committee are Carolyn Pipkins, chairman; Mabel Hinton; Lola Jefcoat; Doris Hinton; Annette Hembree; and Tommy Jolly. Dan Hembree is pastor.



Members of Seminary Church, Perry Association

person's life," said Stephanie Holden, advisor for the Acteens. The girls also sent a care package with a Christmas tree that had homemade orna-

ments, cookies, cards, and pictures of themselves. Pictured (from left) are Lauren Williams, Nikki Brannan, and Christy Acycock.

Mission Friends and GAs of Richburg Church, Hattiesburg, visited the Conva-Rest in Hattiesburg on Dec. 12. The children sang Christmas carols, read poems, recited memory verses, and visited with Conva-Rest residents.

Wayside Church, Vicksburg, received \$2,511.64 for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The goal was \$1,500. Larry W. Haggard is pastor.

Acteens of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian, have a unique missions project. They began writing letters of encouragement to the many local service men and women who were

deployed and away from their families. The girls also sent letters to their families' back home. "It has been a great way for the girls to witness and share their faith and also it showed them how something as small as a letter can mean so much in a



Acteens of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian

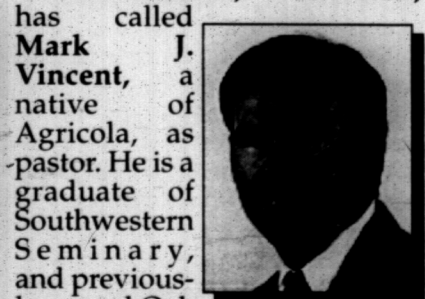
### STAFF CHANGES

Agricola Church, Agricola, has called Charles Bradford

Day as minister of music and worship, effective Sept. 16. Day is a graduate of William Carey College and New Orleans Seminary. He previously served at Improve Church, Marion Tri-County Association.

First Church, Charleston, has called Mark J. Vincent, a native of Agricola, as pastor. He is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary, and previously served Oak Grove Church in Burleson, Texas.

Glen T. Williams is now serving Central Church, McComb, as minister of edu-



Vincent

cation on a part-time basis. He was formerly in retirement and last served as mission director in Pike Association.

Corinth Church, Heidelberg, has called Mike Powell of Stonewall as pastor.

Harrisville Church, Harrisville, has recently called Brandon Wilemon as minister of youth. He previously served as minister of youth at Rienzi Church near Corinth.

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## NAMES IN THE NEWS



Vick, McMullen, and Davis

**Liberty Church, Kemper Association**, ordained Michael Vick and Jeff Davis as deacons on Dec. 16. Pictured (from left) are Vick; Albert McMullen, pastor; and Davis.

**Zane Gaddis** was ordained as deacon and Doyle Carter was elected to the deacon body on Nov. 25 at West Laurel Church, Laurel. Pictured (from left) are J. Wendell Turner, chairman of the deacons; Carter; Gaddis; and Cary Worthington, pastor.

Recent graduates from the

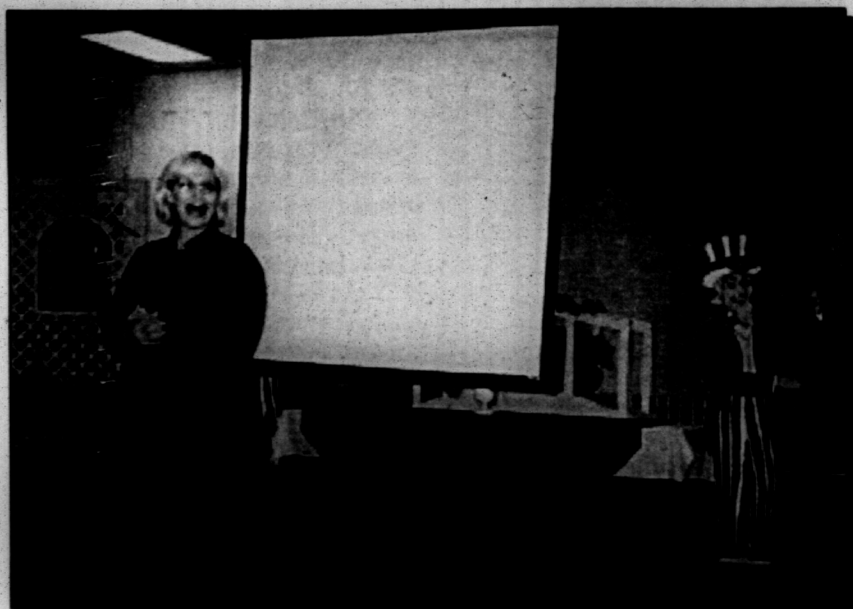
Alabama Parish Nurse Project are Laverne Barnes of Richland, Deborah Bolian of Brandon, Doris Bryant of Pearl, and Ella Garner Jackson of Jackson. Gretchen McDaniel, parish nursing track coordinator at Samford University, defines the parish nurse as one who is trained to help coordinate a health ministry within a congregation. A parish nurse is a registered nurse who has completed 37 hours of training under a leader trained by the International Parish Nurse Resource Center in Chicago.

**Members of First Church, Maben**, with perfect attendance are Nicky Lewis, 38 years; and Donna Sansing, one year. Pictured (from left) are Lewis and Sansing.

**Rana Burt** (pictured), WMU consultant for Lee County, showed slides and related the experience of her recent mission trip to the Ukraine, to a group at Calvary Church, Pascagoula.



Lewis and Sansing



Burt

## Revival date

**Bala Chitto, Magnolia:** Feb. 8-10; Fri. and Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m., Sunday School and morning worship followed by dinner on the grounds; Randall Creel, evangelist; Randall and Brenda Creel, music; Dave M. Hartson, pastor.



Turner, Carter, Gaddis, and Worthington

## BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

**Paintings and drawings** by William Carey College (WCC) Alumni Ray E. Bell ('61) and Lisa White (M.Ed.'95) are on exhibit at the Lucile Parker Gallery. A reception honoring the artists will be held in conjunction with homecoming activities on Jan. 26 from 10-11:30 a.m. The exhibit will hang through Feb. 1. Both artists reside in the Columbia area. This exhibit can be viewed during the regular gallery hours, 1-4 p.m., Mon.-Fri., except for school holidays. Call (601) 582-6192 to

schedule special appointments or group tours. The Lucile Parker Gallery is located in Thomas Hall on the WCC Hattiesburg Campus.

**William Carey College (WCC)** will celebrate Homecoming 2002, Jan. 24-26. This year's theme is Around the World with Carey Alumni.

Events on Thursday include a Chili Cook-off at 6 p.m., a Symphonic Winds Concert at 7 p.m., and a bonfire and pep rally at 8:15 p.m.

Registration for the Golf Tournament begins at 11:30 a.m. on Jan. 25 at the Shadow Ridge Golf Course. The format is two-man scramble and the fee is \$50. Reservations are required.

Other events planned for Friday include class reunions and a fried catfish supper. After a seven-year absence, the Miss Carey Pageant has been reinstated and will be held at 7 p.m. in the Dumas Smith Auditorium. Registration for the annual 5K Walk/Run for Hope and 1-mile Fun Run will be held

Jan. 26 at 8 a.m. All proceeds go to the Hope Project, a student-led community service organization.

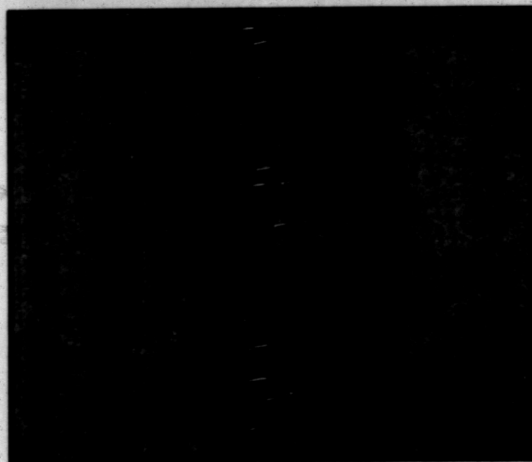
The Annual Alumni Awards Luncheon, two basketball games featuring the Crusaders versus Loyola University and a Bootstrapper Reunion are other events being held on Saturday. "In the 70s, many of the students were military men and women who served or are serving around the world. This homecoming features a reunion of those 'Bootstrappers,'" says Donna Wheeler, alumni director.

A USO Show, "Tribute to Our American Heroes", will be presented at 7:30 p.m. in the Dumas Auditorium. For additional information, call the alumni office at (601) 318-6107 or (800) 962-5991, ext. 6107.

**The Winters School of Music** at William Carey College and First Church of Hattiesburg will co-sponsor "It's Time for Music!" which is a ten week music and movement program for children and their caregivers, beginning Jan. 25 at First Church. Classes for children ages birth to two and a half will meet Fridays at 10 a.m. and classes for children ages two and a half to four years old will meet Fridays at 9 a.m. For additional information, call the Winters School of Music at (601) 318-6175.

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## Mississippians graduate from SWBTS

Dan Glenn and Byron L. James graduated from Southwestern Seminary on Dec. 15. Glenn, son of Debbie Glenn of Clinton and Dave Glenn of Mobile, Ala., earned a master of divinity degree. James earned a graduate diploma in theology. He is the son of Booby and Brenda James of Lindstrom.



Children of First Church, New Augusta



The care group of Calvary Church, Pascagoula, under the leadership of Bill and Christine Grubbs, prepared 35 Christmas baskets for shut-ins.



**The Fishermen**, sponsored by the Baptist Student Union of Mississippi State University, is available to sing for worship service, banquets, youth activities, and DiscipleNow retreats. Pictured (from left, seated) are Krystal Jenkins, Starkville; Ginny Haynes, Nesbit; Kat Millione, Southaven; Shelley Houston, Brandon; (standing) Justin King, Holly Pond, Ala.; Alec Taylor, Jackson; Ike Andrews, Columbus; and Jordan Haines, Southaven. Contact Michael Ball, director, at (662) 323-5761 for more information.

**Children of First Church, New Augusta**, give an offering to missions every Sunday. The offering was recently used to purchase supplies for the children in Bosnia, which was distributed by members of the church currently serving in Bosnia. Children pictured (back row) are Taji Wells, Nathan Hinton, Sara Beth Spicer, Cody Brewer, Arleigh Roberts, Dalton McLendon; (middle row) Triggs Armstrong and Madison McLendon; (front row) Sheldon Armstrong and Amber McLendon. (Not pictured are Tanner Rutherford and Dustin Lloyd).



Make, Bake, and Take ministry of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian

**Mission groups of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian** (pictured), have a ministry called Make, Bake, and Take. They meet at the church to make cookies and crafts and then deliver it to the sick and elderly of the community. Stephanie Holden is WMU director.



Acteens of Mantee Church, Mantee

**Acteens (pictured), of Mantee Church, Mantee**, their leaders, and their mothers, raised money by making and selling American flag pins. They have sent over \$1,100 to the Mississippi Disaster Relief NY/DC fund. Other monies received will go to the Heart Fund of the National WMU to help the leaders with emergency ministry needs.

### MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**CHURCH AVERAGING 100** in Sunday School seeks full-time associate pastor/minister of music and youth. Please send resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 2878 Old Hwy. 27, Vicksburg, MS 39180; or fax to (601) 636-7574.

**SEBASTOPOL BAPTIST CHURCH**, Sebastopol, is seeking a full-time youth minister. Send resume to Youth Minister Search Committee, Sebastopol Baptist Church, P.O. Box 163, Sebastopol, MS 39359; or call (601) 625-8355.

**SOUTH GREEN BAPTIST CHURCH**, 3185 South Green Street, Tupelo, MS 38801, is seeking a full-time minister of music/youth. Salary is negotiable. If you are interested in this position, please call Gary Smith at (662) 842-8447 (church) or (662) 842-7989 (home); or e-mail gdanield@ayrix.net.

**CHURCH AVERAGING 275** in Sunday School seeks full-time minister of music. Please send resume to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 535, Bruce, MS 38915; or fax (662) 983-2177.

**MONTICELLO BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a preschool/daycare director. Interested applicants must fill out an employment application which is available from the church office. Applicants must also submit a resume. Send resume to Monticello Baptist Church, P.O. Box 814, Monticello, MS 39654. For employment application, call (601) 587-2114.

**BAYOU VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH**, Gulfport, is seeking a part-time children's minister. A heart for children a must. Contact church office at (228) 863-2482 or [www.bayouview.org](http://www.bayouview.org).

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**KENSINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resume with salary history to Kensington Baptist Church, 4945 Winchester Rd., Memphis, TN 38118. Attention Dale Stone.

**WWW.GULFSHORECONDO.COM.** For rent by owner. (205) 554-1524 or (251) 968-3222.



**Indian Springs Church, Jones Association**, recently held an International Missions Banquet. The speaker was Robert Fortenberry, who is serving in Botswana, Africa. There were over 164 in attendance for the program and banquet. Mike West is pastor.



## **DICTATORS AND PUPPETS**

Editor:

As a pastor, I'm deeply apologetic that Richard Benton apparently experienced dominant pastoral leadership in the church (December 13 letter to the editor entitled, Reminders).

Questions on "pastoral authority" cause much division in Baptist churches today. Two basic ungodly pastoral extremes exist: dictators and puppets. Dictators impose their authority but reject responsibility. Puppets embrace responsibility but exercise no authority to carry it out. A godly pastor bears scriptural responsibility while exercising under Christ's authority. According to Scripture, here's some gentle reminders for his "Reminders":

As Christ is the head, God appoints pastors as under-shepherds to oversee his flock to follow Christ (Eph. 3:7). Though accountable to congregations, godly pastors are ordained ministers of God, not merely employees of the church, accountable primarily to God and Scripture as his only supervisor (Heb. 13:17). Scripturally Christ's church is a theocracy, God-rule, not a democracy, majority-rule (Eph. 1:22). No one except

God is always right, but if the pastor faithfully preaches the Bible and not his own ideas, we should follow accordingly (Heb. 13:7). Every person has equal access to discovering God's will, though pastors have primary responsibility for leading the church in his will (Eph. 4:11-12). Since 20% of members pay 80% of tithes, pastors over-encouraging financial obligation is likely not the problem (Mal. 3:10). God welcomes Biblical principles and convictions over subjective human opinions (2 Tim. 3:16). "Deacon" means servant, not decision-maker (Acts 6:1-6). Pastors must respect a member's right to his opinion, not necessarily the opinion itself if unscriptural (John 17:17).

If successful ministry is partly determined by how he gets along with people, then was not Jesus' ministry largely a failure?

Stephen Forfer  
Forest

## **KUDOS TO BIVOS**

Editor:

The other day I read an article about the death of one of our national evangelists. The headline read, "A mighty oak has fallen."

Rightfully so. However, almost every week one of our own bivocational pastors slips away to be with the Lord and they hardly get a headline. I write this as a tribute to all our pastors, especially bivocational, and in memory of my own brother-in-law, Billy Ray Smith, who went to be with the Lord on Dec. 13. He gave 38 years of his life to the ministry in practically one county in Mississippi. Like many other bivocational pastors, he labored tirelessly at two positions carrying the same joys and burdens that we all carry.

My bivocational brother-in-law helped me get started in the ministry and his belief in me helped me believe in myself. I never thanked him enough. God help us to be more thankful for those who preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

No, his headline did not read, "A mighty oak has fallen," but like so many other bivocational pastors it could have read, "A tiny acorn falls." We all know what tiny acorns produce. So to all our bivocational pastors, thanks for the job you do and your labor of love, though often unnoticed, is not forgotten.

Ricky E. Kennedy, pastor  
East McComb Church, McComb

# **Couple heading up unique seminary program**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — A group of Southeast Asian church leaders gathers for a breakout session during the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists (KNCSB) Minister/Spouse Retreat.

Leading them are a man and a woman whose bright smiles light up the room.

They are Thira and Montira Siengsukon, marriage and ministry partners. Both are of Chinese descent and were reared in Thailand in their families' Buddhist traditions.

They were both saved as teen-agers at Sacred Light Church in Bangkok, Thailand. The two were youth leaders in that church, and they were married there on Feb. 1, 1975.

Even their names are significant - Thira means "wise man" and Montira means "heart of a wise man." God is using this unique couple to minister on the other side of the world from their home country.

For 19 years, the Siengsukons have been ministering to Lao people in the United States. Laos and Thailand have experienced conflict as nations for many years.

"There are many cultural differences between us and the Lao people, especially since Montira and I are Chinese by birth," Thira says. "However, we enjoy unity with the Lao people we minister to because of our oneness in Christ."

In 1983, the couple helped

start the Lao mission at Nall Avenue Baptist Church in Prairie Village, Kan., where they served for 11 years. Thira still serves as a volunteer consultant for the mission.

Like ripples from a stone tossed in a pond, the Siengsukons' ministry has been expanding over the years.

In 1988, they began the Laotian School of Theology in the basement of the Nall Avenue Church with eight students in attendance.

The school became a part of Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and recently was renamed the Lao School of Ministry. It has teaching sites in San

Antonio, Dallas-Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, Fort Smith, Ark., Rockford, Ill., and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Lao School of Ministry is a joint effort of the seminary, KNCSB and the North American Mission Board.

Thira is the full-time director and also serves as an



MINISTERING COUPLE — Thira Siengsukon and his wife, Montira, were raised in Thailand as Buddhists, but they became Christians as teen-agers. (BP photo by Stephen Smith)

instructor and textbook writer and is supported through gifts to the Cooperative Program and the Viola Webb Missions Offering.

Montira works full-time as supervisor of the accounts payable department at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan., where she has worked for more than 15 years. She is still right by her husband's side in ministry.

"She has dedicated herself," Thira says of his wife. As a teen-ager, Montira was called to Christian service. "She's the one who works side by side with me."

"I have lost my (Thai) language because I speak in the Lao

language," Thira says.

The two have found a vast mission field among the 300,000 Lao people residing in the United States. They have left behind their own culture and immersed themselves in this ministry.

However, Lao people residing in the United States are very open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ "because of their experience with Christians in refugee camps," Thira says.

Those who fled Laos when the Communists took over in 1975 ended up in refugee camps, including the large Southern Baptist refugee camp in the Philippines.

A crucial need is for trained Lao Christian leaders, and this is where the Lao School of Ministry at Midwestern Seminary gets involved.

The school has 95 students, including pastors, deacons, and Sunday School teachers at the seven teaching sites.

"They need these courses because they don't have a biblical background," Thira says.

One of the major tasks is for the Siengsukons to translate the courses into Lao.

Along with training leaders for Lao churches in the United States, Thira and Montira also are training the people to be international missionaries.

When Lao people living in the United States go back home for a visit to Laos, they have opportunities to share Christ.

"People in Laos see the difference when they go back, and they (native Laotians) have questions," Thira points out.



## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Plan to attend the Southwestern Photojournalism Conference March 1-3. For more information call toll free 1-877-474-4769



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# FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

## Devalued to value

Exodus 1:15-17, 20-22; 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23

By J. Michael Barnett

Permit me to get straight to the point. America is a hand that sheds innocent blood (see Proverbs 6:16-19). The sin of abortion is epidemic in our land. According to our own Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission in 1999 there were 3,878 Mississippi residents who had an abortion. Add to this figure 3,486 abortions performed on women traveling to Mississippi from other states for abortions and you clearly see the epidemic.

State sanctioned abortion is nothing new. Twice in Scripture we experience pro-abortion leaders. In Exodus 1:15-22 we find the first government sanctioned abortion plan. Pharaoh ordered the immediate death of all Hebrew baby boys. This is no different than the partial

birth abortion procedure heralded by many leaders in our country.

The second government sanctioned abortion plan is found in the New Testament. Herod's abortion edict is recorded in Matthew 2:16. It is amazing that both of these state sanctioned abortion plans were activated when God was bringing forth a deliverer. The Devil and wicked humanity never want the God of the living to bring forth life, especially life that will transform the world.

What does the Bible say about this sin? The Bible answers the question concerning when life begins. Jeremiah 1:5 speaks of God knowing and ordaining the prophet before he was conceived in his mother's womb.

In God's view life begins at



Barnett

his ordination. The abortionists commit a presumptuous sin in that they ignore God's foreordination and work contrary to his life-producing power.

The Bible also gives us an example of how to work toward a pro-life society. In Exodus 1:15-2:10 we find several pro-

life advocates. In the text we learn a valuable truth that many deny. Notice that Pharaoh was pro-abortion.

However, the Hebrew midwives, Shiprah and Puah, were pro-life. They were joined in their pro-life stance by Moses' family, Pharaoh's daughter, and no doubt all the babies and parents among the Hebrews.

There is no such stand as pro-choice in our text. You are either pro-life or pro-abortion. If you claim that you would not have an abortion yourself, but you think it should be an available choice for others, then you are pro-abortion.

Pro-choice is a myth fabricated to avoid accountability.

There are two sides in this national debate not three. Where do you stand?

Another lesson from the Bible is that action can be taken. The pro-life advocates of our text took action to preserve life. Hebrews 11:23 tells us that Moses' parents acted in faith.

They knew God's view of life and obeyed. The midwives are the heroines of the pro-life movement. They risked their lives before Pharaoh and refused to participate in the killing of babies. Pharaoh's daughter had compassion and cared for the baby.

These ancient pro-lifers are examples for us. There are some things we can do. First and foremost is to teach our children at home the tenets of biblical morality and sexuality.

The church also can preach and teach biblical purity. This will enforce the truth that sex is reserved for marriage and perhaps save a young person from using abortion as a form of birth control.

We can also win people to Jesus. The Gospel will transform people's lives and ulti-

mately could prevent a lifestyle or world-view that would favor abortion.

Another action is to support Christ-centered crisis pregnancy centers, which are now under attack in our country by the abortionists. Financial and voluntary support is much needed by these centers that help provide alternatives to abortion such as adoption among others. Believers can write their legislators and demand they vote pro-life.

I mention one more endeavor the church must be involved in. We must offer our hearts and hands to people who have been victimized by abortion.

We must stand against abortion with great conviction, but we must also stand for the victims with graceful compassion. The babies are not the only victims. The young women and even the fathers fall victim as well. They need the mercy of Christ. They can mature in the faith and become the greatest advocates of the sanctity of human life.

Barnett is pastor of First Church, Ocean Springs.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Honor the sanctity of human life

Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:13; Ps. 119:73;  
Prov. 6:16-17; Jer. 1:5; Matt. 22:37-40

By Carleen McGraw

Life! God's gracious gift to all. We are appalled at the loss of thousands of lives in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Almost everybody in our nation and people of other nations are still in a state of shock that any person, group, or nation would dare commit such a crime.

Yet, according to available statistics, since *Roe vs. Wade* became law in 1973 millions of babies have been aborted under the protection of our laws. For the most part, news media are indifferent, and outside the Christian commu-

nity, most people just take this method of murder in stride.

In the October 11-17, 2000, National Weekly Edition, the Washington Times stated, "Since *Roe vs. Wade* became a law in 1973 there have been more than 38 million abortions...more than 4,000 a day. Less than three percent of these have anything to do with rape, incest, or the health of the mother. For the most part, these babies are simply unwanted, so they are killed."

The dictionary defines euthanasia as "painless, peaceful death, the deliberate putting to death, in an easy, painless way, of a person suffering from



McGraw

an incurable and agonizing disease."

An article in a recent issue of The Clarion Ledger stated that a cancer patient "gathered her husband, two adult children, and friends about her... then drank a glass of lethal drugs dissolved in water. Within minutes the 67-year-old cancer patient stopped breathing, quietly becoming one of more than 90 Oregon residents to use the states Death with Dignity law since voters approved it in 1997."

According to this article, Oregon is the only state that allows physicians to help hasten the death of terminally ill patients, and the law has become the center of a battle of wills between Oregon and the Bush administration which opposes the practice; it also stated that last month U. S. Attorney General John Ashcroft said the federal government would suspend or revoke the licenses of doctors who prescribe federally controlled

drugs to patients who want to use them to die.

In a recent issue of The Baptist Record, an item noted that Belgium is likely to become the second country to legalize euthanasia. The Belgium senate recently passed a bill permitting euthanasia by a 44-23 vote. When the legislation becomes law, Belgium will join the Netherlands as the only countries to allow doctors to end their patients lives lawfully.

According to God's Word, life is a gift from him. "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

We are God's creation. The psalmist wrote, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mothers womb. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, you saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:13, 15b-16).

God had a plan for our lives even before we were born. Listen to Jeremiah the prophet: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

God not only created us; he set up laws by which we are to be governed if we would enjoy the life he has given us. Among these laws is one that states specifically, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). This law, along with the other nine commandments, makes up the basic laws governing our nation today.

In the centuries since he created the entire world and declared it good, God has not changed; his laws have not changed. How can man think he has the right to take a life before it enters the world in the form of a tiny baby, or that he has the right to end a life before God has declared that life is finished?

McGraw is a member of First Church, Louisville.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,

no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the **who, what, when, where** details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST  
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# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director

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(601) 922-2242  
e-mail: bcvl@misnet.com

## Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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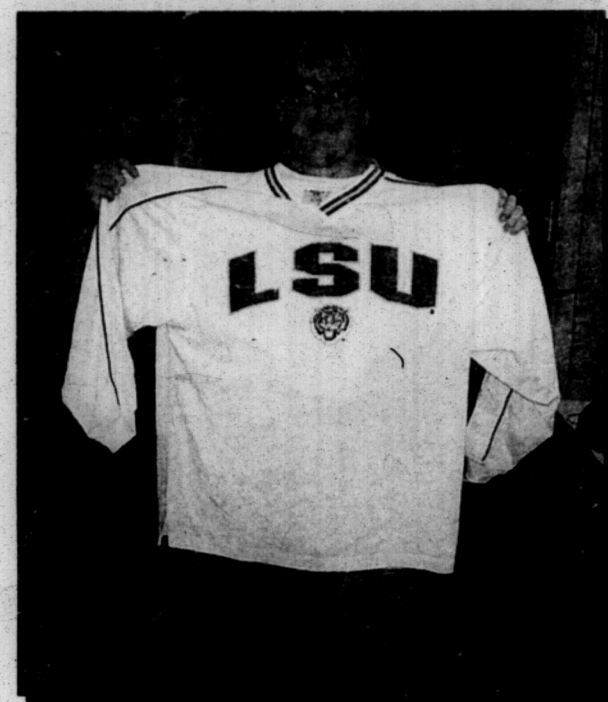
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Jonathan was really excited to receive his LSU shirt for Christmas. Thank you to all of you who help make Christmas extra special for the all the residents of The Baptist Children's Village.

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**Pam & Eddie Helms**  
Ralph, Cheryl Leigh & Mary Lynn Perkins



Rev. and Mrs. Jose Lopez delivered toys and bath items to The Baptist Children's Village. These items were received at the Ingelisa El Buen Church in Forest, MS as admission to a concert.



# Church prays for man, calls him as pastor

HARTFORD, Conn. (BP) — When the members of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Hartford, Conn., began praying for the salvation of Gregory Torres in the early 1980s, they had no idea he would one day be their pastor.

Torres, an administrator with Bell Pump Services and also the owner of a bar, accepted Christ as his personal Savior in 1985. The bar was the first thing to go.

"They [the church] put me to work. I didn't have much time to grow," Torres recalled. "God worked in my life very fast."

He served as a Sunday School teacher, church treasurer, and deacon. In 1991, the church asked him to serve as interim pastor. The search committee then

asked him to submit a resume to be considered as pastor.

"I prayed and prayed," Torres said. The support of his wife, sons, and extended family was a key factor in his conviction that God was indeed calling him to change vocations.

"Their support made it easy for me to accept that God was calling me to pastor the church," he said. "I love to meet people and share with them. I think my call is preaching and teaching in New England. It's hard to explain, but it's very convincing."

When Torres became pastor in February 1992, the church was meeting in a school. Later that year, they purchased an 18,000-square-foot building to remodel into a church facility. Located in a Hispanic neighborhood a few blocks from the state capitol, the building was structurally sound but had burned three times and the inside was filled with garbage and asbestos.

After asbestos was removed, volunteer teams from New England and several southern states traveled to Hartford to help create a worship center, preschool room, and other facilities on the first floor.

Church members moved into the first floor in June 1997. Church members completed the second floor that includes a fellowship hall, Sunday School and discipleship classrooms, and a commercial kitchen the church hopes to use in a soup kitchen ministry.

Today, the church includes members from eight Hispanic

cultures plus African Americans and persons of Irish descent.

Most Sunday School classes are held in English while discipleship groups, also held on Sunday morning, are conducted in Spanish and English.

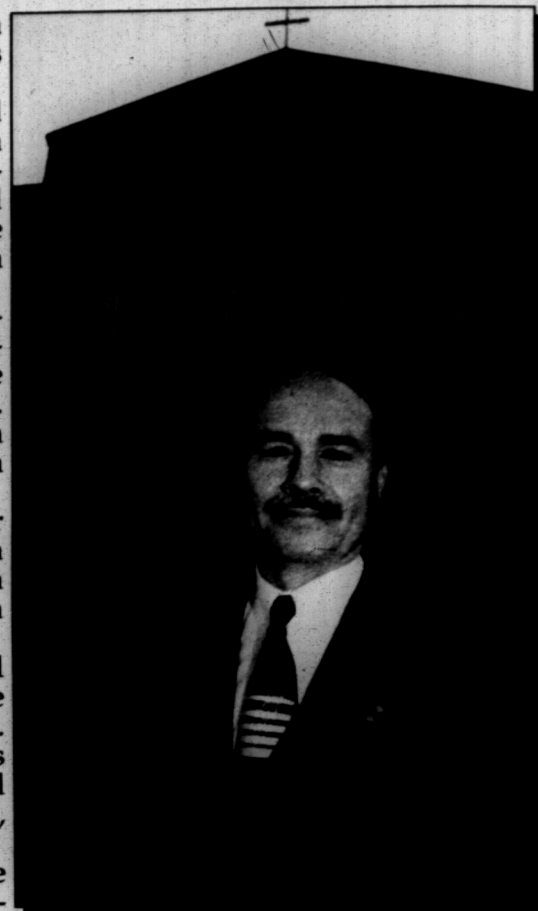
For worship, everyone gathers in the sanctuary where songs are sung in both languages. Then the children depart for a service in English.

Teens and younger adults also worship in English. Others stay in the worship center for a message in Spanish.

"A lot of our kids and teenagers feel more comfortable in English. I'm glad the church is open to that," said Mildred Carrasquillo, Sunday School director.

"This year we are focusing more on discipleship," she said. New converts first attend a class where "we teach them the basics of what we believe. We pass them through that class first so they know where we stand."

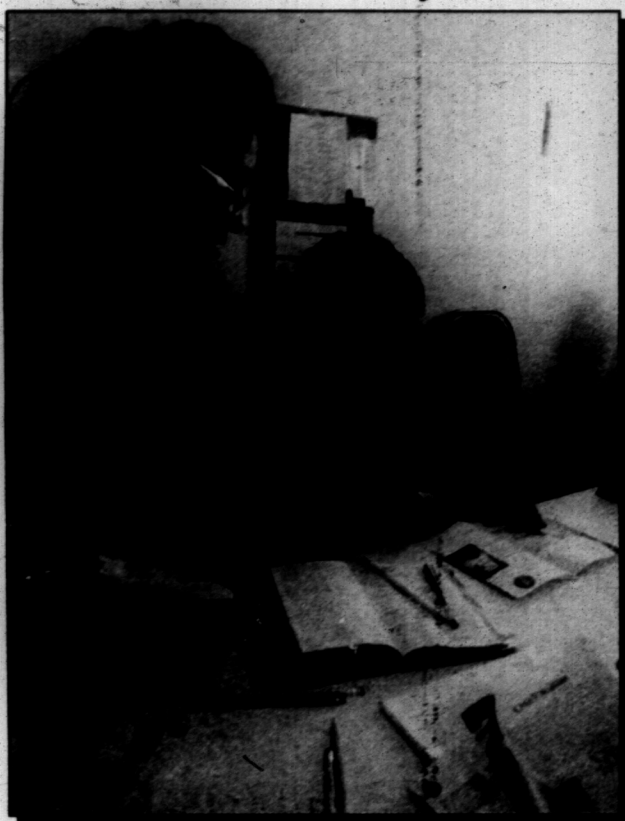
Carrasquillo said the church has seen the Holy Spirit at work in recent months as "people are really turning to the Lord."



Torres

For the future, she said, "I hope in the Lord we keep growing, reach the neighborhood and keep reaching people as the Lord told us to do. This neighborhood is mostly Hispanic."

"We're in the right place," she pointed out.



SHOWING THE WAY — Youth Sunday School leader Margrita Torres of Primera Iglesia Bautista, in Hartford, Conn., works with 14-year-old Jason Caraballo to help him think through questions in his Sunday School lesson. (BP photo)

## 12 new B&H releases starting off the New Year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — How to use teachable moments to introduce children to faith is the subject of one of 12 resources Broadman & Holman (B&H) Publishers is introducing during January.

B&H is the trade publishing division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

When Can I? Questions Preschoolers Ask in their First Steps toward Faith, by Thomas Sanders, director of the childhood ministry publishing department at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, helps guide parents and teachers to create environments that promote faith questions from children.

Other books being released by B&H in January are by Robert E. Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB); Henry Blackaby, author of Experiencing God; and Avery Willis, author of MasterLife and senior vice president of overseas operations at the International Mission Board.

### NON-FICTION

◆ Beneath the Surface: Steering Clear of the Dangers that Could Leave You Shipwrecked, by Reccord, provides biblical insight and personal wisdom to address issues of sexual fidelity and morality.

◆ On Mission with God: Living God's Purpose for His Glory, by Blackaby and Willis, shows readers how God uses the seven realities (introduced in Experiencing God) to find his purpose for their lives.

◆ And When You Pray: The Deeper Meaning of the Lord's Prayer, by Ray Pritchard, senior pastor of Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, Ill., examines the prayer most believers have committed to memory but have never closely studied.

◆ The Family: Unchanging Principles

for Changing Times by Dorothy Kelley Patterson, wife of Southeastern Seminary President Paige Patterson, takes a look at the importance and responsibilities of the Christian family.

◆ How to Parent Your Teen without Losing Your Mind, is a compilation of advice and counsel from Christian Parenting Today and Campus Life magazines.

The book contains four sections dealing with pre-teens (ages 10-12), early teens (ages 13-14), mid-teens (ages 15-17), and late teens (ages 18-19). Each section has questions from parents of teens in that age group, followed by advice from experts who have devoted their lives to understanding and guiding teens.

◆ HCSB: The Invitation, by artist Ron Dicianni, is a presentation of the gospel both in word and illustration. Also included are Scriptures from the Holman Christian Standard Bible New Testament to guide new believers in their journeys with Christ.

◆ When Can I? Questions Preschoolers Ask in their First Steps toward Faith, by Thomas Sanders, is a new resource for parents and teachers to help them create environments for children that introduce them to the Christian faith and prompt teachable moments.

### FICTION

◆ Written on Her Heart, by Alan Maki, is a novel about Molly Meyers and her long-lost love James Wade who was shipped off to the Vietnam War before they could marry.

When she doesn't hear from James again, she assumes he has been killed in battle. Years later when a friend visits Molly for her 49th birthday, Molly learns some amazing news.

◆ Worth of Riches, the second novel in the Matanuska Series by Bonnie Leon, tells the story of Ray Townsend's promise to Will Hasper to take care of Will's family after his death.

With Will now gone, Ray struggles to help out Will's widow Jean and her family. Not everyone wants Ray around, but Jean helps him understand that the peace he seeks can only be found in Jesus' hands.

◆ Home Run Feud is the 22nd book in the Chip Hilton Sports Series. In this book, Chip deals with the new first baseman and heavy hitter on the team, Ben Green.

Ben's non-sportsmanlike conduct and his total disregard for team strategy cause the team's morale to spiral downward. Ben must learn to put the team first, and Chip is around to make sure that happens.

◆ Word & Song Greatest Bible Stories Ever Told, is produced by Stephen Elkins. The new children's series contains a variety of the best stories and songs from the original Word & Song Bible.

Each book comes with a CD containing narrated text by children and celebrities and 10 songs by the Wonder Kids Choir. The first five books in the series are: God's Power, Special Families, Courage & Strength, Stories that Build Character, and Stories of Faith.

◆ The Just Like Jesus Said Series, by Melody Carlson, includes two books, Don't Worry About Tomorrow and Love Your Neighbor.

This new series presents children with typical situations they may face every day and shows them how to conduct themselves by illustrating what Jesus would have said or done.

B&H products can be purchased at any LifeWay Christian Bookstore.

## Bibliocipher

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ZEDQADCFDTZVAZY AZ  
DCAF HNXEAWN ZED,  
DCTD DCN FKAHADP  
THN FOUXNWD OZDE  
MEO; UOD HTDCNH  
HNXEAWN UNWTOFN  
MEOH ZTGNF THN  
QHADDNZ AZ CNTLNZ.

SOBN DNZ: DQNZDM

Clue: 0 = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Daniel Six: Twenty-Two